

The Present Crisis Within the Churches of Christ



Thrust Statement: Misunderstanding of the Word of God does not, in and of itself, constitute one a false prophet.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24; 2 John 9

Are Christians false teachers when they do not dot every “i” and cross every “t” the same as someone else? Should Christians cite **Matthew 7:15** against other sincere believers—individuals who have accepted Jesus as Lord in their lives and whose external behavior is in harmony with the Sermon on the Mount? Since **Matthew 7:15** is frequently cited by many well-meaning Christians to castigate other believers over biblical interpretations, one must seek to understand Jesus’ use of this phrase in context. As stated in Part One of this series, the primary focus of this series centers around one of the three movements that originated within the Stone/Campbell Movement—the Churches of Christ. Many leaders within the Churches of Christ advance an illegal use of the three occurrences of this phrase, which misuse promotes division within the Body of Christ. Yet, this odd way of interpreting the “false prophets” passages is not unique to just one segment, or division, within the Churches of Christ; it is also found in other Christian fellowships under the banner, “Church of Christ.” Why do so many sincere Christians continue to misapply God’s Word against so many saints who also love the Lord and seek to do His will? The answer lies in how to interpret the Word of God. Countless Christians read the Bible as they have been taught by generations of interpreters within their own distinctive fellowship. Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez go right to the heart of the matter when they write:

One of the main principles of the Protestant Reformation was that of *sola Scriptura*—the sole authority of Scripture in questions of faith. The Reformers themselves did not agree on the scope and application of that principle. Some, like Luther, meant by it that anything that was contrary to the clear words of Scripture should be rejected, while traditions that did not contradict the Bible could—and normally should—be retained. Zwingli and others went much farther and sought to do away with anything that was not clearly supported by Scripture. But in spite of these differences, all agreed that the reason why the Reformation was needed was that, to a greater or lesser degree, the tradition of

the church made it difficult, if not impossible to read the Bible correctly.[\[1\]](#)

PRESENT CRISIS WITHIN SOME CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIPS

Tradition is still making it difficult for Christians to read the Bible correctly. As a result of the foothold that custom(s) has within many Churches of Christ, the churches as a whole are hopelessly divided over opinions. These divisions are deep and wide. Issues are so hotly debated that for one to disagree with the status quo of a particular group is to call down upon his/her head the epithet—false teacher. The lines of demarcation are tearing this distinctive fellowship into many warring factions, which movement started out to unite Christians in all the various denominations. The heart of all the confusion is over pattern theology, which focuses on the methodology of how to conduct a worship service on Sunday morning with its five acts. Each group basically has its own agenda. Those who refuse to conform to the exacting pattern of a particular fellowship are frequently branded with the epithet “false teachers.”

This essay is a brief summary of the conflict within the Churches of Christ—especially within Montgomery, Alabama—in its identification of “false prophets” in Matthew’s Gospel. Since this essay is dealing with conflict, this author has cited the writings of several godly men who think they are true to God with their system of theology. One of the authors cited in this work is O. B. Porterfield. These citations from his pen are not cited in order to castigate this brother in Christ, but rather the references to his various essays are given in order to draw a clear picture of the divisions within the Churches of Christ. This author also cites the writings of Ray Dutton in his castigation of Buddy Bell who is the current pulpit minister of the Landmark Church of Christ. The citations from his letters are not to call into question his honesty or integrity, but to illustrate the mind-set of one who thinks that he has have a handle on correct biblical interpretation, at least as the time of his tirade against another servant of the Most High God.

Country-wide Conflict

As stated above, this paper is not designed to haul over the coals those within the Churches of Christ, but it is written to alleviate, hopefully, so much division among Christians within this movement. This treatise is also written to support Christians in their endeavors to go back to the Bible in order to correct so much abuse toward other saints. Some Churches of Christ today are experiencing change that is causing some churches to level the harmful charge of false prophets against those who turn aside from long defended cherished traditions (traditionalism). Sometimes the label “change agents” is put forth in a derogatory sense in order to bring about rejection of the one who seeks change. The way this phrase is so loosely handled today, one could apply this phrase to Jesus as well as to all of His apostles. To many, within the Churches of Christ, this epithet has a sinister overtone. Today, as in the Reformation, one’s heritage has made it difficult to interpret the written word accurately.

Christians must reexamine their traditions in light of God’s Revelation. Traditions are often equated with the Word of God itself. Leroy Garrett points out that

People tire of our equating *our* understanding of the word of God with the word of God itself. This is to say that we must distinguish between revelation and interpretation. Revelation is what God has given us in scripture. Interpretation is what we conclude the scriptures to mean. One is divine, the other human.^[2]

Innumerable Christians can no longer distinguish between the interpretation of the interpretative community and the Word of God itself. It is in this vein of orthodoxy that Stafford North, associated with Oklahoma Christian University of Science and Arts, forewarns against change, but this, too, is based upon his own interpretative community.^[3] North points out in defense of his position that “Paul, John, Jesus and others in the New Testament forbid anyone to change or vary from this teaching. Jesus warned of false teachers and spoke of those in judgment who thought they were His but would be turned away because he ‘never knew them’” (**Matthew 7:15-20**).^[4]

North cites many Scriptures to justify his negative position of turnabout within the Churches of Christ. But upon closer analysis of the Scriptures he cites, the evidence does not appear to support his judgment of indictment. No one denies the Scriptures he relies upon to teach that one should not depart from the teachings of Jesus, but rather many Evangelical believers reject his application of those Scriptures to maintain the status quo within his interpretative community.

Each interpretative community advances its own brand of orthodoxy. There are approximately twenty-five divisions within the Churches of Christ, each one postulating its own trademark of conformity. The history of the Churches of Christ is riddled with conflict and division over peripheral issues. It is in this same vein of disharmony within the Churches of Christ that Richard H. Niebuhr addresses the subject of hostility within Christendom itself. He is correct when he pungently captures the very essence of exclusiveness through teaching the history of the church.

The teaching of church history is sometimes made the occasion for developing a sense of alienation from other groups rather than for developing a sense of unity. Like every other history, it is used at times to promote indoctrination in a peculiar tenet. Yet fundamentally and generally it is taught as church history.^[5]

This alienation reached a climax for some within the Churches of Christ in the 1960s. In 1966, for instance, seventeen men and women voiced their concern for change within the Churches of Christ.^[6] The concern of these Christians shook the establishment and reverberated throughout the Churches of Christ with fear of the unknown. Many were coming out of Plato’s cave.^[7] They were no longer seeing shadows, but they were seeing reality. Robert Myers in analyzing the tension build-up writes in his “Introduction” the following scenario that describes the purpose of the book:

Some of us within the Church of Christ segment of the Restoration movement, and some recently out of it, have felt it imperative to analyze its failures. This anthology of essays is a criticism of a religious way of life. It is written by men who have remained within the Church of Christ, or by those who have felt they had to seek wider fellowship but still love dearly the people they left behind.^[8]

Since the publication of *Voices of Concern*, many leaders have repudiated the narrow-mindedness within many Churches of Christ. And, as a result of rethinking ritualistic worship positions (five acts) once held, many are now advancing the concept that God has not ordained a ritualistic worship service with five acts and also that God has a larger fellowship than just those within the Churches of Christ.^[91] Thus, crises exist within the churches, and this call for change is working havoc among those who seek to stifle variation in the so-called worship service. But for those seeking more freedom in their gatherings, they often suffer ostracism by other Christians.^[10] Neal Pryor, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of Bible at Harding University, is correct when he writes: “There is hardly a congregation in our brotherhood that is not feeling the pressure for change. This trend can be a great benefit in that it calls us to re-examine what is really essential for us to keep and what are traditions that can and perhaps should be changed.”^[11]

Curtis Cates, Director of the Memphis School of Preaching and co-editor of *Yokefellow*, laments the fact that many within the Churches of Christ are no longer “set courageously for the defense of the Truth.”^[12] Again, he says, “Liberalism is an enemy of the light of God’s Word, the absolute and knowable Truth (2 Tim. 3:14-17).”^[13] He then identifies two men (Rubel Shelly and Randy Harris) within the Churches of Christ as associated with “the liberal, modernistic human philosophies”^[14] These two men published a book to call attention to many of the traditions within the Churches of Christ that Christians should no longer adhere to.^[15] Cates complains that “Brethren Harris and Shelly propose to give us ‘a theology for the 21st century church’ (p. xiii); they will ‘reexamine the foundation’ (p. xiv).”^[16] Once more, he calls attention to the urgency of stopping “The mouths of false witnesses.”^[17] He believes that these two men are attacking the truth.^[18] He then relies upon **2 John 9—11** to justify separation and ostracism from these two men.^[19]

Two years after the publication of the above book, Cates wrote another book in which he refers to Shelly by citing the words of Jesus in **Matthew 7:15**: “Jesus warned, ‘Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them’ (Mat. 7:15-16).”^[20] In 1990, C. Leonard Allen published a book^[21] that also caused him to come under “fire” from Cates as a false prophet. Cates accuses Allen of disrespect for the Word and also charges him with treating the Word as “unrealistic” and “fairy tale-like”:

In other words, what brethren did was fairy tale-like and unrealistic; one cannot know what Truth is, and to think he can is to merely dream. Is that what Christ commanded when He said, “Beware of false prophets...” (Mat. 7:15), or when He warned, “But in vain do they worship me, Teaching [sic] as their doctrines the precepts of men” (Mat. 15:9), or “Let them [false teachers and their religions] alone: they are blind guides” (Mat. 15:14), or what Paul meant when he charged, “. . . to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour” (Gal. 2:5).^[22]

In 1996, Jim Waldron, another patternist, wrote an article in which he, too, took to task the theology of Shelly and Harris. He, too, bemoans the fact that the teachings of Shelly and Harris have infiltrated the mission fields.^[23] He further castigates these men by citing articles by Choate,^[24] also patternistic in his theology, in which he says,

He is also demonstrating how false teachers in this generation are seeking to do

the same thing in some of our schools. Also, the *Firm Foundation* has over the last five years documented much of the current digressive movement coming out of Abilene Christian University.^[25]

This present crisis within the Churches of Christ involves the concept of pattern theology. Pattern theology, as stated above, is the belief that God has ordained a prescribed ritual to be performed on Sunday morning in a prescribed manner in order for there to be “worship in Spirit and truth.” Waldron calls attention to ten men that do not advance the so-called five acts of worship, also known as pattern theology. Waldron, as he cites Choate, states the matter firmly:

Brother Goebel Music in 1991 published *Behold The Pattern*, in which he meticulously documented the uncertain sounds of ten preachers and/or college professors. These men are: Max Lucado, San Antonio, Texas; Stephen Taylor, former professor of Abilene Christian University, who is now in England; Larry James, Plano, Texas; Rick Atchley, Fort Worth, Texas; Randy Fenter, San Antonio, Texas; Jim Hackney, Fort Worth, Texas; Jeff Walling, Mission Viejo, Calif.; Randy Mayeux, Dallas, Texas; Rubel Shelly, Nashville, Tenn.; and Denny Boultinghouse, West Monroe, La.^[26]

Just a perusal of the books and religious journals reveals the prevailing crisis that crystallizes around this expression (five acts): For example, Garland Elkins, Dean of Public Relations in the Memphis School of Preaching, asserts:

There is a true worship. Jesus said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Without hesitation, we affirm that worship to God under the New Testament consists of preaching (Acts 20:7), the Lord’s supper (Acts 20:7), singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), praying (Acts 2:42), and the giving of our means (1 Cor. 16:1-2). These five acts are the only authorized acts of worship to God.^[27]

LOCAL DISSENSION IN MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

The Churches of Christ in Montgomery, AL are experiencing turmoil in unparalleled consequences—disunity. The former Seibles Road Church of Christ in Montgomery, AL published a bulletin weekly to call attention to apostasy—defection as defined by the then Seibles Road Church of Christ “interpretative community,” which is still the consensus of many within the Churches of Christ (June 31, 2004). This bulletin printed (now defunct) articles by various authors to call attention to those who are so-called false prophets within the Churches of Christ. Since the now defunct Seibles road congregation is a part of the history of turmoil within the Christian community in Montgomery, AL, it seems appropriate to preserve for posterity the mind set of Porterfield and his writers—so many individuals with the same mind set who sought/seek to serve God, in spite of their factiousness.

The former minister, O. B. Porterfield^[28] of the Seibles Road Church of Christ republished, in his November 3, 1996 bulletin an article written (originally written on September 25, 1996) by Ray Dutton, a former member of the Landmark Church of Christ. The Dutton article is prefaced with some remarks by O. B. Porterfield in which he reminds his readers that in May 1994 that he wrote about Buddy Bell and Joe Beam’s appearance on Faulkner University’s “Focus.” His Preface is titled: “Buddy Bell Returns to Montgomery.”^[29] In this “Preface,” he expresses sorrow that his efforts were futile. He could not prevent these two men from appearing on Faulkner University’s lectureship.

In the third paragraph of Dutton's letter to the elders of the Landmark Church of Christ, he says, "Recently, I became very upset about the scheduling of a known false teacher to speak to our young people."^[30] Dutton, former pulpit minister in Montgomery, continues in this letter to speak of Bell's association with other known false teachers: "Though I was well aware that Buddy had a reputation for keeping company with a number of known false teachers, I had hoped that he was personally committed to the truth of God."^[31] He then cites **Matthew 7:15** in warning the family at Landmark about Buddy Bell now minister of the Landmark congregation. He writes of the danger of the souls at the Landmark Church of Christ.

I would give up my family at Landmark and never return if that alone would save the many precious souls here who are now gravely in danger from a man I now believe is a false teacher "secretly brought in" (Gal. 2:4), who has come to God's flock in "sheep's clothing" (Mt. 7:15) but is in truth a "ravenous wolf."^[32]

Matthew 7:15 is cited by Dutton as applicable to Bell. Dutton relates a series of questions that he presented to Bell in order to elicit from him his feelings about "(1) 'BAPTISM,' (2) 'INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC and DENOMINATIONALISM,' (3) 'SOLOS, CHOIRS, QUARTETS AND OTHER SPECIAL MUSIC,' (4) 'THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH,' (5) 'HONESTY WITH THE BRETHREN,' AND (6) 'FELLOWSHIP WITH THE DENOMINATIONS.'"^[33] As a result of this encounter, Dutton then cites **Titus 3:10** and combines this Scripture with **2 John 9—11** to justify his characterization of Bell as a false teacher.

Joe Beam,^[34] another minister who calls for reflection upon traditionalism, came under attack again by Jerry C. Brewer. Brewer cited **Romans 16:17-18**, **2 John 9—11**, and **Ephesians 5:11** to uphold his belief that Beam is a false teacher.^[35] Another Montgomery minister, Philip Black, minister for the Carriage Hills Church of Christ, also received a reprimand from Porterfield^[36] and, at the same time, he also received the epithet of false teacher from Armond Hoover. Hoover expresses his concern over Black's influence within the Churches of Christ and then labels him as a false teacher.

Your shallowness is showing, Brother Black. Brother O. B. and all other knowledgeable and understanding Christians know that only God can and will condemn the disobedient to His Will. However the righteous and obedient are commanded to (and will) warn and mark all false teachers and the disobedient (Rom. 16:17-18), beware of false prophets in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15-16) (or be aware – A.H.). A warning, Grievous wolves (false teachers—A. H.) will enter among us, not sparing the flock, even our own selves to draw away (deceive – A.H.) disciples after them (Acts 20:29-30).^[37]

The third Church of Christ to come under attack in Montgomery, AL was the Vaughn Park Church of Christ. Mark Smith, at the time of the attack, was the pulpit minister for this congregation.^[38] On July 13, 1997, Porterfield lashed out against all three congregations (Landmark, Carriage Hills, and Vaughn Park) for their participation in a lectureship called "Jubilee." He wrote: "BUDDY BELL, minister at Landmark, and PHILIP BLACK, minister at the F.O.G (Carriage Hills), were on the program and Vaughn Park advertised and encouraged people to attend this gathering of heretics."^[39] In another bitter article, Porterfield cited **Matthew 7:15** as applicable to Mark Smith: "We proved his error by the scriptures. Matt. 7:1-5 condemns harsh judgment, but a judgment must be made according to Matt. 7:15-16. John 7:24 command [sic] righteous judgement according to the Word of

God, Psa. 119:172.”[\[40\]](#)

These citations from the *Seibels Road Church of Christ* bulletin illustrate the crises that presently exist in the city of Montgomery, AL. I have reviewed the issues of this bulletin for the last two years, and almost without exception, every page of this paper summons the same Scriptures to justify separation from those who do not explain the Word of God as this particular “interpretative community,” namely, the Seibels Road Church of Christ, presently interprets it. Even though this particular fellowship is no longer in existence, nevertheless, there are still congregations in the city of Montgomery that still cites the same Scriptures out of context to give credence to their sectarian views. This brief review of the contemporary situation of division within the Churches of Christ in Montgomery calls for a reexamination of how to interpret and understand Scripture in light of its context. In one’s examination of one’s beliefs, one must understand that God has never made one’s salvation contingent upon perfection in knowledge. Alexander Campbell, too, faced the problem of knowledge in his own day concerning fellowship and unity among God’s people:

Amongst Christians there is now, as there was at the beginning a very great diversity in the knowledge of the Christian institution. There are babes, children, young men, and fathers in Christ now, as well as in the days of the Apostle John. This, from the natural gifts of God, from the diversities of age, education, and circumstances, is unavoidable. And would it not be just as rational and as scriptural to excommunicate one another, because our knowledge is less or greater than any fixed measure, as for differences of opinion or matters of speculation?

Indeed, in most cases where proscription and exclusions now occur in this country, the excluded are the most intelligent members of the society; and although no community will accuse a man because he knows more of his Bible than his brethren, and on this account exclude him from their communion; yet this, it is manifest, rather than heresy, (of which, however, for consistency’s sake, he must be accused,) is, in truth, the real cause of separation.

If God has bestowed better gifts or better opportunities on one man than another, by which he has attained more knowledge, instead of thanking God for his kindness to the community, they beg God to take him away; and if he will not be so unkind, they will at length put him from among them under the charge of heresy. In most instances the greatest error of which a brother can be guilty, is to study his Bible more than his companions—or, at least, to surpass them in his knowledge of the mystery of Christ.[\[41\]](#)

CONCLUSION

This essay examined the controversy within the Churches of Christ as to who is or who is not a false prophet. Journals and books were called forth to illustrate the confusion that exists among so many devout Christians. It was observed that Christians often tag other Christians as misleading teachers when anyone dares to go against the grain of the intelligence of the religious leaders in certain “interpretative communities.” Every Christian is confronted with the question: Is deformity in comprehension in and of itself sufficient grounds for the epithet of false prophet? One must determine who is and who is not a counterfeit teacher from Scripture, not tradition.

The question is, Is one a sham teacher simply because one believes in instrumental

music, handclapping in the assembly, solo singing, Sunday schools, individual communion cups, orphan homes, Bible colleges, and so on? Since Jesus warns against imitation prophets ([Matthew 7:15, 24:11,24](#)), then believers do have a responsibility to identify those who come under this classification. One must recognize a false teacher through a correct application of Scripture, not through the traditions of men. The Word of God alone is the criterion that can assist one in making this determination.

The perusals of the various Church of Christ journals revealed that certain Scriptures were relied upon to justify separation from other believers. Two Scriptures cited were [2 John 9](#)^[42] and [Matthew 7:15](#). Many writers, in order to uphold their practice of ostracism, cited these verses to justify their narrow perception of fellowship among other Christians. Charles W. Foreman sets forth the idea that “the divine basis for human unity is not a very popular point of view.”^[43] The lines of demarcation are tearing this denomination^[44] (Churches of Christ) into many warring factions. Unfortunately, the word *denomination* is a word that is generally employed toward other religious bodies outside the Stone/Campbell Movement. In an essay such as this, one is reluctant to employ the word *denomination* with reference to the Churches of Christ. Yet, if Christians understood this term in its proper usage, there would not be the turmoil that presently exists within the fellowship of Christians. How can Christians stand united? Listen once more to Foreman:

When we want to establish unity in our own way, we need to remember that it is the pride which is the thing that divides and alienates men. We see it all around us in our daily life. When men are proud, they become stiff, so stiff that they clash whenever they touch each other, so stiff that they cannot bend over in forgiveness. When they are without forgiveness, there is nothing for them to do but make continuous demands on each other and fall into recriminations when those demands are not fulfilled. So out of their pride their unity is destroyed.

Only when pride gives way to humility and forgiveness can unity grow.^[45]

^[1] Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez, *Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 29.

^[2] Leroy Garrett, “It Means What It Says,” *Restoration Review* 17, no. 4 (April 1975): 69.

^[3] For an interpretation of the “interpretative community,” see Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 171, where he says,

Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions. In other words, these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around. . . . The first community will accuse the members of the second of being reductive, and they in

turn will call their accusers superficial. The assumption in each community will be that the other is not correctly perceiving the “true text,” but the truth will be that each perceives the text (or texts) its interpretive strategies demand and call into being.

^[4] Stafford North, “How To Be Undenominational In A Denominational World,” in Jim Sheerer and Charles L. Williams, eds., *Directions for the Road Ahead: Stability in Change Among Churches of Christ* (Chickasha, Oklahoma: Yeomen Press, 1998), 207.

^[5] H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 15.

^[6] Robert Meyers, ed., *Voices of Concern* (Saint Louis, Missouri: Mission Messenger, 1966).

^[7] Plato, “The Simile of the Cave,” in *Plato: The Republic*, translated with an Introduction by Desmond Lee (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 255-264; see also David Melling, *Understanding Plato* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 97-113.

^[8] Myers, *Voices of Concern*, 1.

^[9] For an excellent discussion of the so-called five acts of worship between Buff Scott and Gary Workman, see Buff Scott. Jr., “Acts of Worship,” *The Reformer* 9, no. 5 (Sept-Oct 1993): 3-7. See also Mike Root, *Split Grape Juice: Rethinking the Worship Tradition* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1992); Mike Root, *UnBroken Bread: Healing, Worship, Wounds* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1997).

^[10] See, for example, Don L. King, “Proper Perspective,” *Old Paths Advocate* LXVII, no. 9 (September 1995): 2, where he expresses his rejection of those who do not conform to his interpretative community’s stance on one-cup and non-Sunday school beliefs.

Why do we worship with one cup? Answer: because we read it plainly in Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:25-28. Is it wrong, sinful, to use more than one? Answer: yes, because more than one cup violates the examples given in these verses, it violates the command for us to do as Jesus did, “this do ye....” (1 Corinthians 11:25), etc., etc. Listen brethren: we believe it is wrong to use more than one cup. We believe people are going to be lost for using more than one cup. Surely, we believe that! If people are not going to be lost for using more than one, then let’s give up the fight and heal the division caused by those who have insisted on using more than one. If it is wrong to use more than one cup in the Lord’s Supper I can’t worship with those who use more than one. If I can’t worship with them I can’t fellowship them and I can’t fellowship you if you do! Is that simple? [sic].

^[11] Neale T. Pryor, “The Essentials of the Faith: What Cannot Change,” in *Church Unity: Stability & Flexibility in the Church*, 1995 Preacher’s Forum, Harding University, Graduate School of Religion, ed. Donald Kinder (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1995), 33.

^[12] Curtis Cates, *The Second Incarnation: A Pattern for Apostasy* (Memphis,

Tennessee: Cates Publication, 1992), 18.

[\[13\]](#) Ibid., 19.

[\[14\]](#) Ibid.

[\[15\]](#) See Rubel Shelly and Randall J. Harris, *The Second Incarnation: A Theology for the 21st Century Church* (West Monroe, Louisiana: Howard Publishing Co., 1992).

[\[16\]](#) Cates, *Incarnation*, 20.

[\[17\]](#) Ibid.

[\[18\]](#) Ibid.

[\[19\]](#) Ibid., 25-27. For an examination of this much-debated Scripture, see Dallas Burdette, “Doctrine of Christ in 2 John 9: Subjective or Objective Genitive?” [ONLINE]. Available from <http://www.freedominchrist.net> [accessed 26 January 2004] located under caption SERMONS AND ESSAYS and, then, under the subheading MISAPPLIED SCRIPTURES; For a an excellent and detailed study on 2 John 9, see also Carl Ketcherside, “Receive Him Not,” *Mission Messenger* 27, no. 6 (June 1965): 81-90.

[\[20\]](#) Curtis Cates, *The “Core/Bull’s Eye Gospel” Concept Refuted: Shall We Have a New “Cultural Church”?* (Memphis, Tennessee: Cates Publication, 1994), 15.

[\[21\]](#) C. Leonard Allen, *The Cruciform Church: Becoming a Cross-Shaped People in a Secular World* (Texas: Abilene Christian University Press, 1990).

[\[22\]](#) Cates, *Concept Refuted*, 38, 39.

[\[23\]](#) Jim Waldron, “False Teaching Comes to Mission Field,” *Firm Foundation* 111, no. 9 (September 1996): 13.

[\[24\]](#) For an example of the five-acts of worship by Choate, see J. C. Choate, *Gospel Sermonettes* (Winona, MS: J. C. Choate Publications, 1993) , 102-104.

[\[25\]](#) Waldron, “False Teaching Comes to Mission Field,” *Firm Foundation*, 13. For additional reading in this same vein, see Jim Laws, Lectureship director, *The Restoration: The Winds of Change*, Eighteenth Annual Spiritual Sword Lectureship [October 17-21, 1993] (Memphis, TN: Getwell Church of Christ, 1993); Dave Miller, *Piloting the Strait: A Guidebook for Assessing Change in Churches of Christ* (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 1996); and William Woodson, *Change Agents and Churches of Christ: A Study In Contemporary problems With Change Agents Among Churches of Christ* (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 1994).

[\[26\]](#) Ibid. For a detailed study and approval of this concept of pattern theology (five

acts), see Goebel Music, *Behold the Pattern* (Colleyville, Texas: Goebel Music Publication, 1991), 393-394. See also Cates, *Incarnation*, 27-28.

[\[27\]](#) Garland Elkins, “Foreword,” in Cates, *Concept Refuted*, 12-13.

[\[28\]](#) Since the publication of this News Letter, Porterfield has resigned from his preaching ministry because of poor health. Also, the congregation that he labored with for many years ceased to exist as a local congregation. I understand that the few members that were left placed membership with other congregation of the same mind-set.

[\[29\]](#) O. B. Porterfield, “Buddy Bell Returns to Montgomery,” *Seibles Road Church of Christ Bulletin* (November 3, 1996): 1.

[\[30\]](#) Ray Dutton, “To: The Elders of the Landmark church of Christ,” *Seibles Road Church of Christ Bulletin* (November 3, 1996): 1.

[\[31\]](#) Ibid.

[\[32\]](#) Ibid., 2. This congregation still comes under attack from other Christians over Landmark’s more open stance concerning Christian fellowship.

[\[33\]](#) Ibid., 3.

[\[34\]](#) Joe Beam was a former pulpit minister for the Carriage Hills Church of Christ—now called Family of God (F.O.G.)—in the city of Montgomery, AL.

[\[35\]](#) Jerry C. Brewer, “Oklahoma Brethren Issue Warning That Is On The ‘Beam,’” *Seibles Road Church of Christ Bulletin* (February 2, 1997): 2.

[\[36\]](#) O. B. Porterfield, “A Reader Responds And Speaks Out!,” *Seibles Road Church of Christ Bulletin* (January 19, 1997): 1. Philip Black is no longer the pulpit minister for this congregation; he is now an elder in this local body of believers known as Grace Pointe.

[\[37\]](#) Armond Hoover, “Dear Philip Black,” Ibid., 2. This article also criticizes unity in diversity and recommends Goebel Music’s book, *Behold the Pattern* (Colleyville, TX: Goebel Music Publications, 1991). For a counter position of Hoover’s negative statements about unity in diversity, see Carl Ketcherside, “The Spirit and Unity,” *Mission Messenger* 25, no. 7 (July 1963): 97-112 [1-16].

[\[38\]](#) See David Hester, “OFF THE MARK,” *Seibles Road Church of Christ Bulletin* (May 18, 1997): 1 for his castigation of Mark Smith as a false teacher as well as a host of others labeled as false teachers.

[\[39\]](#) This commentary (comments) by Porterfield is written in support of an article written by Robert Dodson, “The Move to Unite With Denominationalists,” *Seibles Road Church of Christ Bulletin* (July 13, 1997): 2.

^[40] These comments are in response to an article written by Clifton D. Kelly, “Worrying Too Much About Error? *Seibles Road Church of Christ Bulletin* (December 21, 1997): 2. See also Dallas Burdette, “Judge Not,” [ON-LINE] for an examination of this much-abuse Scripture (Matthew 7:1). Available from www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 26 June 2004], located under caption SERMONS AND ESSAYS, and then under subheading MISAPPLIED SCRIPTURES.

^[41] Alexander Campbell, “To Mr. William Jones, of London, Letter IV,” *Millennial Harbinger* 6, no. 3 (March 1835): 112.

^[42] See Dallas Burdette, “Doctrine of Christ in 2 John 9: Subjective or Objective Genitive?—for an example of context interpretation [ON-LINE]. Available from www.freedominchrist.net [accessed 26 June 2004], located under SERMONS AND ESSAYS, then under MISAPPLIED SCRIPTURES. For an opposing view, see C. A. Smith, “Special Music,” *Old Paths Advocate* LXVV, no. 3 (March 1996): 4-5; Mike McDanie, “The Right Hand of Fellowship,” part 2, *The Light* 27, no. 1 (January 1996): 3-6; Carl Johnson, “The Trojan Horse in the Church,” *Old Paths Advocate* LXVV, no. 2 (February 1996): 1, 7-8; James Meadows, “Does the New Testament Represent a Pattern to Follow?” *Firm Foundation* 110, no. 12 (December 1995): 8-10; Stan Cox, “Is Sincerity Sometimes Enough?” *Guardian of Truth* XXXIX, no. 8 (April 20, 1995): 21-22; Tom M. Roberts, “Romans 14: Satan’s Trojan Horse for Fellowship with Error,” *Guardian of Truth* XXXIX, no. 4 (February 16, 1995): 110-113 [12-17]; Don Walker, “Second John 9 in Light of Context,” *The Restorer* (May/June 1989): 11-14; Jerry Moffitt, “Why I Don’t Have Fellowship With Denominational ‘Pastors’ and Catholic Priests,” *Contending for the Faith* XXVI, no. 8 (August 1995): 1, 3-6; William Woodson, “The Doctrine of Christ,” *The Spiritual Sword* 22, no. 3 (April 1991): 35-38; Roy Deaver, “Who ‘Splits the Log?’” *The Spiritual Sword* 15, no. 1 (October 1983): 11-13; Garland Elkins, “‘Receive Him Not’—II John 9-11,” *The Spiritual Sword* 5, no. 2 (January 1974): 31-34.

^[43] Charles W. Foreman, *A Faith for the Nations* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 30.

^[44] Some within the Churches of Christ deny that this movement is a denomination. For an admission that the Church of Christ is a denomination, see a comment by Alexander Campbell, one of the originators of the Stone/Campbell Movement, he wrote, as early as 1840, to a Baptist scholar, Andrew Broaddus, whom he called brother, about his concern over the written history of the Reformation Movement:

Whenever the history of this effort at reformation shall have been faithfully written, it will appear, we think, bright as the sun, that our career has been marked with a spirit of forbearance, moderation, and love of union with an unequivocal desire for preserving the integrity, harmony, and co-operation of all who teach one faith, one Lord, and one immersion. In confirmation of this fact I am happy to add that no Baptist of good character for piety and morality, has ever been, because of a diverse theory or opinion, excluded from our communion or communities. . .

. We, as a *denomination*,⁴⁵ are as desirous as ever to unite and co-operate with all Christians on the broad and vital principles of the New and everlasting Covenant. Alexander Campbell, “The Editor’s Response to Mr. Broaddus,” *Millennial Harbinger*, New Series, 4, no. XII (December 1840): 556.

^[45] Foreman, *A Faith for the Nations*, 31.